



# Safe Harbor News

## Proposed National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to establish a new national wildlife refuge in the Sandhills area of south central North Carolina. The study area for the proposed refuge includes portions of Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Richmond and Scotland Counties. The overall boundaries of the proposed refuge have not been determined. The specific boundaries will be based on the availability of land, ecosystem needs, and public comments on the suitability of the proposal.

The proposed refuge would preserve habitat critical to the survival of the federally endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and many other species of native plants and animals that depend upon longleaf pine communities. The refuge would provide a protective buffer for existing conservation areas and serve as an important link between the patchwork of lands currently managed by other conservation agencies, the military, and private landowners, such as those enrolled in our Safe Harbor Program. In addition, the refuge would provide greater opportunities for public outdoor recreation, eco-tourism, and environmental education.



## Conservation Center of the Sandhills

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the North Carolina Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, the Sandhills Area Land Trust, and the U.S. Army Environmental Center celebrated the opening of the Conservation Center of the Sandhills on Tuesday, October 30. The opening of the office commemorates a landmark partnership dedicated to preserving and protecting one of North Carolina's last great places - the Sandhills.

### Safe Harbor

### Agreements

**61 Landowners**

**31,870 acres**



Beginning around the second week of July, the Service will provide notice in local newspapers announcing a 45-60 day public comment period for the Service's Environmental Assessment (EA) documentation. This will give interested parties an opportunity to submit their comments on the Service's refuge proposal. At this time, the refuge does not have an official name, so during the public comment period, the Service will also solicit suggested names from the public for the proposed refuge.

## N.C. Department of Transportation Purchases 2500 acres of Land

In a special ceremony on January 29, 2002, State Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippet announced that the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) acquired 2,500 acres of land in Hoke County for a preserve for the federally-endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. This acquisition will also help link together one of the largest remaining longleaf pine ecosystems in the southeastern U.S.

This acquisition will be used to mitigate impacts of highway construction projects in the Sandhills area, which includes the counties of Anson, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Montgomery, Richmond and Scotland, as well as current projects like the Fayetteville Outer Loop. NCDOT paid \$5.3 million for the property, which is located northwest of Raeford and is bordered by Ft. Bragg to the north and N.C. 211 to the south. Following a survey, NCDOT will turn the property over to The Nature Conservancy for long-term management, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
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## Announcing Red-cockaded Woodpecker Symposium IV

**What:** Red-cockaded Woodpecker Symposium IV.  
**Who:** Organized and hosted by the Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.  
**When:** January 27-31, 2003  
**Where:** Savannah, Georgia; Savannah Marriot Riverfront; all day field trip (January 29) on Fort Stewart.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker Symposium IV will bring together most, if not all, of the individuals, agencies, institutions, and organizations involved and/or interested in, or affected by, the conservation, recovery and management of the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). More than 70 speakers will provide 90 presentations on a wide-variety of topics; including, state-of-the-art population and habitat management techniques, latest research findings, regional and landscape-scale conservation partnerships, population status and trends reports, safe harbor and other private land initiatives, population dynamics, demography and ecology, computer-based population monitoring, habitat management, data tracking, and accomplishment reporting systems, and outreach programs. Speakers represent all factions of the RCW world, including academicians/professors, privately and publicly funded researchers, land managers, consultants, graduate students, field biologists, and state and federal administrators and program supervisors. If you are interested in, concerned about or involved with the RCW you do not want to miss this conference opportunity!

An all day field trip (transportation provided) on Fort Stewart, home of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized), will not only highlight their first-class RCW recovery program, but also include stops and discussions about wiregrass/longleaf pine restoration, integration of past and present intensive military training with RCW management, conservation of other longleaf pine ecosystem-related species and live-fire demonstrations of modern weapon systems. The day will conclude with an outdoor barbeque at a local plantation. The conference will also feature a Monday night social and a Tuesday night banquet, guest speaker and awards ceremony.

For more information contact: Ralph Costa - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Coordinator at: (864) 656-2432 or email: [ralph\\_costa@fws.gov](mailto:ralph_costa@fws.gov) or visit the [rcwrecovery](http://rcwrecovery.fws.gov) website at: <http://rcwrecovery.fws.gov>

RCW Symposium IV



Savannah, GA  
January 27-31, 2003